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# U. S. Charge of Raid Hoax Amazes Cuban

BY JOHN SMOLKO

[Special from Fort Lauderdale News]

Fort Lauderdale, Fla., June 4—Defense department officials said today that a phantom flight which eluded United States and Cuban radar defenses did not take place, but a crewman on the alleged flight said he was amazed by the department's report.

"I know the undetected flight was made because I was on it," said the unidentified Cuban crew member shortly after learning of the government report.

Cyrus Vance, deputy secretary of defense, said the entire incident was a publicity stunt by the Thirtieth of November Revolutionary movement.

## Replies to Vinson

Vance made the statements in a letter to Chairman Carl Vinson [D., Ga.] of the House armed services committee, answering questions raised by Rep. Paul Rogers [D., Fla.] concerning published accounts of the reported flight.

Conclusions drawn by the department—that the flight did not take place, the story was a publicity stunt, and south Florida radar defenses were not penetrated—evidently were based on a signed statement by the pilot of the alleged mystery flight.

## Pilot's Denial Quoted

Vance identified the pilot as Frank Fiorini, president of the brigade. In reply to a question about how Fiorini was found, the Pentagon said only that it had been accomplished thru investigative procedures.

Vance's report said that Fiorini's statement read:

"To the best of my knowl-

## CUBA RAIDERS FINED

Bahamas court fines Manuel Ray, exile leader, and seven others captured by British destroyer while attempting to raid Cuba. Story on page 6.

elge, a so-called 'operation phantom' raid on Cuba on May 25, 1964, did not take place. I declare that United States radar defenses were not violated while leaving or entering United States territory."

Fiorini was not available for immediate comment.

Rep. Rogers initiated the probe by the armed services committee last week. He said today he believed the department's report to be "rather conclusive unless there is other evidence."

## Pilot's Offer Refused

The defense department, in writing the "phantom flight" over Cuba 10 days ago, refused an offer by the pilot to show how a Cuban bomber could reach Washington, D. D. without being detected.

The pilot also offered to show American officials how a flight could originate in South Florida and fly direct to Havana by flying 75 feet over the ocean and return to south Florida without being detected by United States or Cuban radar, and how Cuban commandos could land on undetected on the United States coast for sabotage missions.

In return, the pilot asked the government to grant him immunity from any charges of violating United States neutrality laws.

## Acts As Intermediary

Government officials refused such immunity. As a result the pilot and crewman refused to meet face to face with investigators in fear of identification.

The Fort Lauderdale news last Saturday acted as go-between for the probers and the pair who allegedly made the flight. Questions prepared by the government were handed

the two and their answers were relayed to the probers.

Their answers showed that a twin-engine aircraft left south Florida the night of Sunday, May 24, for a foreign port of entry.

From that port, the plane, with a pilot and two crewmen, flew over Oriente province, dropped a field hospital unit outside Santiago de Cuba and dropped propaganda leaflets over Santiago, according to the pilot's answers.

## Probers Given Details

The plane then flew back to the foreign port and from there came into the United States, the pilot said.

The pair gave government investigators detailed answers as to weather conditions over Cuba, altitudes they flew, and the amount of fuel used, but refused to reveal their base of operations.

Vance told Rep. Vinson that on May 28, the day the congressman asked the defense department to investigate the alleged flight, the department already had undertaken an inquiry of its own.

"We have now completed two separate but coordinated investigations conducted by the North American air defense command, the defense department's intelligence agency, and had the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the CIA [central intelligence agency]," Vance reported.

## Lost Pilot's License

Fiorini has been in trouble with the government before because of his anti-Castro activities.

On Sept. 16 of last year, Fiorini was warned he faced a prison term of two years and a \$25,000 fine if he violated provisions of the munitions control law.

He lost his pilot's license on June 13, 1960, for a 1959 leaflet-dropping flight over Cuba with Pedro Diaz Lanz, former Cuban air force commander.

At about the same time, Fiorini was stripped of his United

States citizenship by the immigration department on the basis he served in the Cuban army. Fiorini said he did fight in Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces but became disillusioned with the Cuban dictator. The citizenship revocation order was appealed.